Introduction:

I chose to write about the pregame to an MLB baseball game becuase i have always enjoyed it, but to many people, it can seem odd. But to the fan, pregame has many attractions with the first being: getting a real MLB baseball. Everybody wants to catch a baseball. A kid goes to the ballpark with a big grin on his or her face in hopes of getting a ball. Dads understand this. They carry their glove to every game hoping to fulfill their fatherly duty. But the baseballs we get at the stadium are no different than the ones we can buy at the store. But when it enters the field of a Major League Baseball stadium, it transforms into something to be admired and covetted. What accounts for this drastic change? This is the oddest, but not the only thing i am interested in observing in my study.

I will observe people enjoying the different forms of entertainment during the pregame warmups, which are:

* Watching the ground crew work.
* Watching the pitchers warmup.
* watching batting practice while trying to catch a ball
* getting autographs
* watching fielding practice.

I will try to establish why each of these is so enjoyable.

The thing impeding my progression toward the goal is the fact that i have been, and still am, an active participant of this phenomnenon. I am biased toward loving batting practice and that may blind me and keep me from making some key insights.

Methodology:

Most of my observations will be from past memories. This will work for me because the past few times i enjoyed batting practice, i brought an observer’s point of view. I know pregame to be an event to be admired for many reasons; Mostly, the positive effects on the spirit of a person.

My attitude about the progression from childhood to adulthood affects this study by propping up pregame as a chance for the adult to enjoy “being a kid again.”

In short , our lives are limited to a finite amount of moments of joy and as we get older, these moments become fewer and farther in between, so anything that puts a big smile on our face is immediately valuable.

My goal is to find out exactly what makes pregame so enjoyable.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

I will start out with my observations at the bullpen cage. A crowd always gathers around to watch the starting pitchers warm up. During this time, the fans collectively participate in a ritual where they make sound “woooop” when the pitcher throws the ball, followed by a “whooooo” when the catcher throws it back. It’s pretty fun to take part in and i can’t explain it other than to say, it has probably been passed down from generation to generation.

Then there’es the trashtalking, which can seem odd. How can someone take joy out of putting another person down right? But we see it again and again. Groups of people hanging around the bullpen throwing unnessarily rude comments at the pitchers.

There are three reasons i can think of to explain this phenomenon.

1. Coming from a cultural stand point, i think we have this ingrained need to compete in everything; Mostly how much money we have. And so we see these ball players living our dream and making entirely too much money and we get jealous. So we rip into them a little.
2. Sometimes it’s just fun to be funny. If the trashtalking is witty and pointed at something obvious, then trash talking can be mostly in good fun. Crowds of people gather around the bullpen and there is always one person yelling something. Mostly it’s uncreative and angry, other times it’s actually funny and even players will sometimes crack a smile.
3. As Americans, we enjoy participating more than watching. As a trashtalker, we officially become a part of the game by interacting with the players. We even like to think that we can get into the pitcher’s head and sway the game.

While observing the grounds crew, i noticed some people just watching the crew work and i realized, it can be very relaxing just watching them clean and prep the field for a game. The feeling is a lot like mowing the lawn and enjoying the smooth diistinct lines the mower makes in the grass.

There were also some drunk people yelling at the grounds crew and cheering them on as they do their work. To explain this, i would say:

1. It’s somewhat ironic and funny to be cheering on someone doing a mundane thing.
2. People in the states like to be a part of something big and this is their way of taking part and enjoying it.

During pregame, the players would also go out, shake hands and sign autographs. This one’s easy to explain. Kids like meeting their heroes and adults like selling autographs online. Also, meeting someone you cheer for is pretty cool, and it makes the game more real for the fan.

Then there’s main attraction. Watching batting practice and trying to catch a ball. Everybody wants a ball. Well, not everybody. There are two types of reactions to balls being hit in your viscinity: either the hand goes up in anticipation of a catch, or you do your best at hiding from the impact of the ball.

After the ball hits and someone grabs it and holds it up in triumph, there is usually a murmur of, “aw man, that was close” and enthusiastic “did you see that?!” going around. Almost catching a ball is almost as exciting as catching one. So what’s the attraction?

1. It offers a souvenoir for the entire day and baseball in general.
2. The event of catching a ball offers something exciting to do. When the ball is in the air, suddenly there is a goal. It gets the blood going.

Explaining the joy in getting a ball is tough, but at a ball park the joy is universal. Everyone is smiling and having a good time. I would say that some of the appeal has a lot to do with attempting to attain the unattainable.

Evidence of this is the actual act of catching a baseball. Try it. It’s hard. It starts out as an playful excursion, lifting your head to follow the path and reaching out your hand to grab at it. What isn’t calculated in the brain at the time is how fast the ball comes in. Or how hard a baseball really is?

Before the ball is hit in your direction, getting a ball at an MLB game represented something that looks unattainably fun, but by the time it’s 300 ft in the air and screaming at you, it becomes very real. For people not used to catching a baseball (Me), it can be quite frightening. I usually end up ducking out of the way when a ball is hit toward me. But I still want to catch one. It’s like getting your name called in a bingo. The prize is not in the object won, but in the act of winning.

There is also the fact the catching a ball will always be attached to childhood memories. We like it because we liked it when we were kids.

IV. Ethnology

V. Conclusions

The only thing i can see that needs to be discussed is why people do not enjoy catching a ball. My guess would be that they did not have the childhood experiences of baseball. Either that or they are afraid of the ball.

This discussion can impact further discussions of how positive childhood memories affect us in adulthood.

The question to be asked be to interview people who did not go to baseball games or watch baseball as a kid and see if that person enjoys attempting to get a baseball at a game. If the answer is yes, then we will know the the pregame phenomena is more an effect of American culture than the baseball subculture.

By Nick Saucedo